

REMARKS ON THE OBSERVANCE
OF THE 93RD ANNIVERSARY OF
THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE**HON. JACKIE SPEIER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 23, 2008

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, today, as we observe the 93rd Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, I stand with the millions around the world who have called for greater recognition of this atrocious event in world history.

Madam Speaker, my mother, now 92 years old and still working outside the home, is a first generation Armenian-American who lost much of her family in the atrocities of 1915. She and many of my Armenian brothers and sisters have long waited for validation from our

country and the international community of simply acknowledging the events that took place and were well documented at the time. Growing up, I heard stories about our relatives who were lost. As I got older, I read the telegram sent by our Ambassador Henry Morgenthau to the Secretary of State on July 16, 1915:

"Deportation of and excesses against peaceful Armenians is increasing and from harrowing reports of eye witnesses it appears that a campaign of race extermination is in progress under a pretext of reprisal against rebellion."

We are told by some to forget the Armenian Genocide, to get over it. But to forget any incident like this is tantamount to allowing it to happen again.

The facts before us are not in dispute. The reason we still debate this is not to determine

if a genocide took place but rather, to determine if we have the political backbone to stand up for the truth.

Madam Speaker, the Members of this House disagree on many things in the course of our work. But it is the things we agree on that bind us together. Freedom. Democracy. Opportunity. And the repudiation of any act of genocide, ethnic cleansing or subjugation.

We condemn the Nazi concentration camps, the Soviet gulags, the Khmer Rouge's killing fields and the current and lasting tragedy in Darfur. We wouldn't think of excusing or ignoring any of these. To do so would be unconscionable. Why then, do we allow our nation's official reaction to the Armenian genocide to be little more than a shrug?